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U. S. Department of Agriculture

Thursday, June 24, 1937

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Subject: "VERY SMALL HOUSES AND CAMPS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, U. S. Department of Agriculture. Bulletin available, 1738-F, "Farm House Plans."

--ooOoo--

Not the "three R's", but the "three where's" is really my subject today. The three "where's" in a very small house are: Where to sleep, where to eat, and where to do cooking, laundry, and other housework. Perhaps where to store the family possessions might be added to this list. The chief reason for building as small a house as possible is to hold expense down, since the construction costs are determined in part by the number of square feet of floor area. Where to get information or plans for such houses, particularly for rural districts, is also a problem.

Did you know that the government has a bulletin giving 40 practical house-plans for moderate cost farm homes? It is free. It shows different types of houses suited to the climate of our many different regions. They have been developed by architects and extension specialists of the U. S. Department of Agriculture in various states. Among these 40 plans there are several to choose from, suited to each section. Some are fairly large, some very small, and some start out as small units but show exactly how additions can be made later.

At this season some families are thinking of summer vacations. It may be they are planning to put up mountain cabins or water-side shacks as cheaply as possible. These plans for very small houses in the bulletin I mentioned would be just the thing to suggest what can be done in this way. In families with several growing boys such cottages can be built in no time if everybody helps. I know one family where two boys of 15 and 18 helped build a summer home. When their father figured up, he found that the two sons had done work worth at least \$300.

In looking through the bulletin just referred to, I noted ten very small houses with good features for vacation purposes, and also suitable for young married couples starting out on a farm, or for tenants with small families. They would not be adequate for the typical farm family, however. Do you want to write down the number of that bulletin? It's 1738-F- "Farmhouse Plans."

The dimensions of all the houses in the very-small-house group are kept to the minimum by using the living rooms for sleeping rooms at night, by planning dining-alcoves or breakfast-nooks, whichever you like to call them, or simply eating in the kitchen. None of them has a bathroom in the first stage, but in each case the architect indicates how a bathroom could be added.



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Here's a house that measures only 23 feet six inches by 14 feet,- 325 square feet of floor area. This house has an ingenious sleeping arrangement which would be just the thing in a summer cabin. It has double-deck beds in the living-room, screened off by draw curtains. The frame-work for the beds could be built as the house is being built. The kitchen is long and narrow, but conveniently arranged, with a breakfast nook for meals, also built in and requiring no furniture to be bought.

A place for sleeping is arranged in the next plan by curtaining off two beds at one end of the 17 by 15 living room. One person can also sleep on the porch. The two beds are not only curtained off from the main part of the room, but separated from each other by two shallow closets and a folding screen. The closets are lightly constructed and may be removed when the house is enlarged and a real bedroom added.

A very good plan from the State of Washington provides sleeping quarters for three by using a folding double bed attached to the wall of the living-room, and a bunk in the combined kitchen-dining-room. The floor area is almost square- 23 feet 6 inches by 23 feet. The rooms are unusually spacious for a house of this size, and there is a fireplace. The architect shows how easily a bedroom, bathroom and sleeping porch can be added to the original house.

By way of contrast I might mention some houses planned for tenants in the southwest, where out-door sleeping is invited by the mild nights. The architects show a long narrow living-room, a kitchen, a work-porch with shower and laundry facilities, and leave you to guess where the occupants sleep. My guess is- in hammocks under the trees!

I confess I'd prefer a small house designed for New England living. Although it originated in Massachusetts, it is not a typical "Cape Cod" house, with low-hung eaves and central entrance. It is somewhat "ell" shaped, and in floor area, less than the house with part of the living-room screened off for beds. But this house has two small bed-rooms and a hall to reach them; a very convenient well-arranged kitchen, plenty of closets, and the architect shows how a bath-room could be installed on one half of the entrance porch. This is the house that would get my vote, I think, because if it were built of suitable materials you could live in it the year around, even on the stern and rockbound coast of Plymouth Harbor.

One or two other ideas may interest you: Space is saved in a 20 by 19 foot house with a small bed-room, by omitting the partition between the living-room and the kitchen. You just go around the corner of the bed-room and there you are,- right among the pots and pans. A two-room house frankly combines the kitchen and living-room, its other room being a bed-room. It is built with the definite intention of adding on at the back almost as much as the original house. And there are two little houses for the south or middle west which are somewhat rectangular in plan, except that one corner is given to an entry porch or a work porch in each case.

Well, as the street vendor said, "You pays your money and you takes your choice." House Number 6506, on page 65, is my choice. You'll have to send for the bulletin to make your selection. To repeat, it's Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F, "Farmhouse Plans."

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